

MEMORIAL

OF

THE LEGISLATURE OF ARKANSAS,

ASKING

*For an appropriation for completing the removal of the raft in Red river.*

DECEMBER 30, 1845.

Referred to the Committee on Commerce, and ordered to be printed.

*To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:*

Your memorialist, the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas, would respectfully press upon the attention of Congress the importance and necessity of adopting efficient measures for the removal of the raft in Red river. In the judgment of your memorialist, it cannot be controverted that it is an object eminently national in its character, and to which the public money can be constitutionally applied; and your memorialist cannot but entertain the belief, that while Congress annually expends large sums for public work on the seaboard, a comparatively small pittance will be denied for a great national object in the west, the attainment of which is demanded by considerations of public policy and individual justice. The general government, in making appropriations previous to 1836 for the purpose, induced a large emigration above the raft, and hundreds of thousands of acres of the public domain were purchased at the Washington and Natchitoches land offices, and put into cultivation, under the implied guaranty that the removal of the raft would be speedily prosecuted to completion, thereby making one of the great tributaries to the Mississippi river available, as a common highway to the market, for western and southern produce. Without the aid of the general government in removing this greatest obstruction in the navigation of Red river, the landed property of individuals above the raft must become comparatively valueless, and a great loss accrue to the general government in the public domain yet unsold; a loss which, in the estimation of your memorialist, will far exceed the cost of the entire removal of the raft. This obstruction being removed, the large bodies of public land above it would be taken up, and situated as they are in a fine cotton region, the growth of that product would be greatly augmented. But it is not on the ground of individual benefit or injury that your memorialist urges the measure; it is on the higher grounds of being a public benefit, and unquestionably important to the general government. The United States is under a strong moral obligation to the Choctaw Indians to open the naviga-

tion of Red river to their boundary west of Arkansas, the commissioners who treated with them having verbally promised it. The main reason, in the judgment of your memorialist, for the completion of the work, is, that it would be a significant auxiliary in the military operations of the government. The raft is situated on our southwestern frontier, and there are garrisons above it which must be supplied with provisions, arms, and munitions of war. With the navigation of Red river obstructed, those things must be transported by land routes at great expense, risk, and difficulty. It is probable that additional garrisons will, at some future time, be established on Red river above the raft, (and particularly in the event of the annexation of Texas,) to more effectually protect our southwestern territory from hostile aggression and Indian depredation. In case Texas should not be annexed, and should become the theatre of Mexican war, there can be but little doubt that the government would find it necessary to distribute a considerable military force high up on Red river, to prevent aggression; and in either event the removal of the raft would be a matter of the highest consequence. It would enable troops to be transported with celerity and convenience to any point on Red river by water communication; and by the same communication every thing necessary to successful military operations could be obtained, without the cost and delay incident to land conveyance. To say nothing of its importance in a commercial point of view, which must strike every one at all acquainted with the geography of the country through which Red river passes, your memorialist believes that it is a measure sanctioned by sound policy, and recommended by a sense of justice to the southwest. The experiment heretofore made proves that the ultimate removal of the obstructions is entirely practicable; and under the direction of an experienced and efficient officer, your memorialist confidently believes that the work would be speedily accomplished. The apparent failure *heretofore* has been in consequence of the suspension of the work before it was fully completed, and owing to the want of an adequate appropriation. The mode of operation by contract not having met public expectation, suggests the propriety of committing the work to the management of an officer under the command of the United States government. It is believed that the plan accompanying the report of Colonel Long offers the cheapest and most effective mode of conducting the work. Your memorialist, therefore, asks of Congress that an appropriation of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars be made to complete the removal of the raft; and, as in duty bound, your memorialist will ever pray.

JOHN S. ROANE,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

JOHN WILLIAMSON,

*President of the Senate.*

Approved, January 7, 1845.

THOS. S. DREW.